ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ: ORALITY, TEXTUALITY, AND THE CHRISTIAN TRUTH IN IRENAEUS' *ADVERSUS HAERESES*

BY

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Irenaeus and the Formation of the New Testament Canon

In *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8, Irenaeus describes the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the "four-formed Gospel" (τετράμορφον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον), likening them to the four-faced cherubim upon which the Logos sits enthroned (cf. Rev 4.7; Ezek 10.14) and asserting that "it is not possible that the gospels can be either more or fewer in number than they are." As the first extant defense of the unique authority of the four now canonical gospels, this text has proved pivotal for the reconstruction of the early stages in the development of the NT canon. Although interpretations of its exact significance differ, most scholars seem to agree that, in the words of T. C. Skeat:

> Every study of the Canon of the Four Gospels begins, and rightly begins, with the famous passage in which Irenaeus, writing about the year 185, seeks to defend the Canon by finding a mystical significance in the number four.[1]

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[1] T. C. Skeat, "Irenaeus and the four-gospel canon," *Novum Testamentum* 34 (1992) 194. For instance, Bruce Metzger cites *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8 to conclude that "the Great Church by the time of Irenaeus had ceased to recognize any but the four Gospels" and that "for Irenaeus the Gospel canon is closed and its text is holy" (*The Canon of the New Testament* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1987] 154-55; so also Skeat, "Irenaeus and the four-gospel canon," 198-99; Graham Stanton, "The Fourfold Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 43 [1997] 322; Alain Le Boulluec, "L'Écriture comme norme hérésiologique dans les controverses des IIe et IIIe siecles [domaine grec]" in G. Schöllgen and C. Scholten, eds., *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum, Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann* [Münster: Aschendorffsche, 1996] 72). The issue of whether Irenaeus in fact aims to

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Consequently, Irenaeus has often been understood as a seminal figure who marks a decisive turning-point in the history of the Church. Characteristic is Hans Von Campenhausen's assertion that Irenaeus signals

> . . . the transition from the earlier period of belief in tradition to the new age of deliberate canonical standardization—a transition in the direction of later orthodoxy in which the Canon of the Old and New Testament was firmly laid down.[2]

The dichotomy of Scripture and Tradition, however, proves problematic in light of the importance of tradition (παράδοσις) within Irenaeus' own thinking, as well as his many comments defending the authenticity of the oral traditions that unify the universal Church (e.g. 1.10.2; 3.4.1-2; 5.20.1-2).[3]

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promote a canon, in the later sense of that term, will be discussed in length below. Concerning the assumption that *Adv. haer.* 3.11.7-9 presupposes an already established "Gospel canon," the evidence of the Muratorian Fragment here proves critical. If one accepts the traditional second century dating of this text (e.g. Stanton, "Fourfold Gospel," 322-25; Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 193), Irenaeus' comments might reflect the proto-orthodox consensus at his time. However, following A. Sundberg, Geoffrey Mark Hahneman has recently argued against the traditional dating of this Fragment, proposing a fourth century dating (*The Muratorian Fragment and the Development of the Canon* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1992] 215-18). Even if Hahneman's thesis does not prove wholly conclusive, many scholars now agree that his arguments are convincing enough that we cannot base our reconstruction of the early development of the NT canon too heavily upon this one document (e.g. Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995] 209-20; Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels* [London: SCM Press, 1990] 243). Without the corroborating evidence of the Fragment, however, it becomes problematic to assume that Irenaeus simply presupposes an established "Canon of the Four Gospels"—rather than attempting to defend the authority of these texts (see Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 100-105).

[2] Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Canon*, translated by J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 182. Although his subsequent analysis of Irenaeus is more sophisticated than this sweeping generalization suggests (see e.g. pp. 182-83), it remains significant insofar as it is frequently quoted (e.g. McDonald, *Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 164-65; Helmut Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien: Ihre polemische und apologetische Behandlung in der Alten Kirche bis zu Augustin* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1971] 51). See also Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 290-91.

[3] André Benoit, "Écriture et Tradition chez Saint Irénée," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 40 (1960) 32-43, esp. 36-37, 41; John Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus* (London: Epworth, 1948) 87-93; Denis Minns, *Irenaeus* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1994) 116-22; also Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque II^e-III^e siècles*, Tome I: *De Justin à Irénée* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985) 236; *idem*, "L'Écriture comme norme hérésiologique," 72-73, 76.

Here, it is especially important to note Irenaeus' own use of the term κανών. Although this term would later come to denote a list of authoritative texts, he himself never uses it to refer to written works. Rather, he speaks of the κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας ("Rule of Truth"),[4] solely with reference to authoritative teachings (1.9.4, 22.1; 2.25.2, 27.1, 28.1, 28.3; 3.15.1; 4.35.4; see also 1.10.1; 3.2.2, 4.1, 5.1, 14.4; 4.32.1, 33.8).[5] The majority of scholars rightly acknowledge that this second century use of κανών remains distinct from its later meaning.[6] However, many overlook the epistemological significance of this distinction. For Irenaeus, the κανών functions as an extra-textual criterion for distinguishing true doctrine from heretical speculations, authentic texts from spurious compositions, and proper Scriptural interpretation from "evil exegesis" (see e.g. 1.*praef.*1-2, 3.6, 8.1, 9.1-5; 2.*praef.*1).[7] As such, his κανὼν τῆς ἀληθείας differs markedly from the

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[4] On the origin and meaning of this phrase, see Emmanuel Lanne, "'La Règle de la Vérité:' Aux sources d'une expression de saint Irénée," *Studia Anselmiana* 79 (1980) 59-70; Heinz Ohme, *Kanon Ekklesiastikos: Die Bedeutung des altkirchlichen Kanonbegriffs* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998) 61-77; Bengt Hägglund, "Die Bedeutung der 'regula fidei' als Grundlage theologischer Aussagen," *Studia Theologica* 12 (1958): 4-19. In his *Epideixis*, Irenaeus uses the related phrase κανὼν τῆς πίστεως ("Rule of Faith"). For a discussion of the significance of such formulae for the development of doctrinal creeds, see also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1950) 76-82, 95-96.

[5] This sense of κανών is consistent with its use in a wider Greco-Roman context to mean a "criterion or standard (Latin *norma*) by which the rectitude of opinions or actions may be determined" (Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 289-90)—as well as Paul's use of this term in Gal 6.16 (cp. 2 Cor 10.13-16). See further Ohme, *Kanon Ekklesiastikos*, 21-60.

[6] According to Metzger, "this use of κανών was late in developing; so far as we have evidence, it was not until the second half of the fourth century that κανών and its derivatives . . . were applied to the Scriptures" (*Canon of the New Testament*, 292; see also McDonald, *Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 13-18). Athanasius appears to be the first author to make this association, referring to the books of the Old and New Testaments as κανονιζόμενα ("canonized"; *Epist. Fest.* 39, see also *Decrees of the Synod of Nicea* 18; see David Brakke, "Canon Formation and Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth Festal Letter," *Harvard Theological Review* 87:4 [1994] 395-419).

[7] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 18-21 (also: *The Art of Performance: Towards a Theology of Holy Scripture* [London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1990] 46-53); Guy Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 82-84; Joseph Lienhard, *Bible, the Church, and Authority: The Canon of the Christian Bible in History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995) 49-52. See also Mary Ann Donovan, *One Right Reading? A Guide to Irenaeus* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997) 11-17;

κανών of later tradition, which attributes a self-legitimizing degree of sanctity to a certain group of texts.[8] Although Irenaeus' comments about the four now canonical gospels may reflect a similar tendency, he never equates κανών directly with any texts at all. Rather, his articulation of this concept within *Adversus haereses* privileges the issue of proper interpretation over the issue of text selection, consonant with its primary aim to denounce the Valentinians and their devious derivation of false beliefs from true Scriptures.[9]

Just as an understanding of Irenaeus' concept of κανών must distinguish between different stages in the Christian development of this term, so there is also much danger of retrojectively reading his defense of τετράμορφον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον in *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8 through our knowledge of subsequent developments, misinterpreting its original purpose within Irenaeus' own work, as if this were simply identical with its later influence on orthodox Christianity. Before considering its significance for early Church history, it is necessary to locate this passage within *Adversus haereses* as a whole. Towards this goal, this inquiry will consider Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον throughout *Adversus haereses*. Analyzing and categorizing every occurrence of this term, I will attempt to demonstrate how Irenaeus draws upon the full range of its previous meanings and often combines them in artful new ways. This pattern of usage reflects his primary concern, not to establish the canonicity of these four gospels, but rather to defend the singular Gospel message against

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T. F. Torrance, "The Deposit of Faith," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36 (1983) 4-8, 13-15; cf. Lanne, "La Règle de la Vérité," 69-70.

[8] According to Harry Gamble, the shift from Scripture to canon "altered the basic conceptions of the nature and authority of scripture: instead of being the church's tradition of testimony to the revelation, the scripture is now seen as God's revelation to the Church; instead of being the words of the apostles, it is now seen as the word of God mediated through the apostles" ("Christianity: Scripture and Canon" in *The Holy Book in Comparative Perspective*, edited by Frederick Denny and Rodney Taylor [University of South Carolina Press, 1985] 50). Similarly, Lawson suggests three stages in canonization: [1] the formation of written records, [2] the attribution of increasing authority to these records, which "are set apart from other by virtue of repute . . . (but) are still of authority *on account of their authorship*," and [3] "the converse process: The works of these authors are declared to be of authority *because they are in a recognized Holy Book*" (*Biblical Theology*, 32-33). For some interesting suggestions concerning the earliest stage of this process, see D. Moody Smith, "When Did the Gospels Become Scripture?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 119 (2000) 3-20.

[9] E.g. *Adv. haer.* 1.1.1-3, 3.6, 8.1, 9.1-3, 29.11; 2.*praef.*1, 10.1, 27.3; 3.12.12, 21.3; 4.26.1; 5.13.5; Ohme, *Kanon Ekklesiastikos*, 77; see also Elaine Pagels, "Irenaeus, the 'Canon of Truth,' and the Gospel of John: 'Making a Difference' through Hermeneutics and Ritual," forthcoming in this journal.

a multiplicity of heretical deviations.[10] Irenaeus neither articulates nor assumes a "Christian Canon" in the later sense of that phrase. Instead, buttressing the Church on all sides against the threat of heresy, he weaves a sophisticated argument about how multiple authoritative Christian documents (i.e. "gospels") can paradoxically bear witness to an essentially singular Truth (i.e. the "Gospel").

Towards Mapping a Semantic Range of Meaning

As Helmut Koester has demonstrated, the earliest Christian use of the term εὐαγγέλιον occurs in the Pauline Letters and reflects its status as a "technical term . . . for the Christian message and its proclamation," probably rooted in missionary activity.[11] This Christian specialization of its more general use to denote "good news" or "news" in Greco-Roman literature influenced Matthew, Mark, Acts, and the Deutero-Pauline Epistles—as well as other first century and early second century writings, both proto-orthodox (e.g., *1 Clement, Barnabas, Didache*, the letters of Ignatius) and "gnostic" (e.g., *Gospel According to Mary*, *Gospel of Truth*).[12] Always occurring in the singular, our earliest examples of this term refer to a message that is proclaimed (κηρύσσειν), preached (εὐαγγελίζεσθαι), and heard (ἀκούειν).[13] Its denotation of the Christian teaching, in a general sense, is shown by its frequent use in the genitival phrases such as the "Gospel of God," "Gospel

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[10] Indeed, as James Barr reminds us: ". . . the fact that a writer or theologian concerned himself with questions of the canon does not necessarily mean that they were very important to his basic thinking" (*Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983] 59).

[11] Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 4-7; "Written Gospel or Oral Tradition?," 293-95.

[12] Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 1-4, 7-18, 22-23; "From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989) 365-73; Robert H. Gundry, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ: How Soon a Book?," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115 (1996) 321-25; also Pheme Perkins, "Spirit and Letter: Poking Holes in the Canon," *Journal of Religion* 76:2 (1996) 322-23. On the absence of the term εὐαγγέλιον in the Gospel of Luke, Gospel of John, the Johannine Epistles, *Shepherd of Hermas*, *Gospel of Thomas*, and Polycarp's *Letter* (with the exception of the postscript, probably a later addition), see Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 9-10, 18-21. On εὐαγγέλιον in the Pauline letters, see Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983) 144-51.

[13] κηρύσσειν: Matt 4.23; 9.35; 24.14; 26.13; Mark 1.14; 13.10; 14.9; 16.15; Gal 2.2; Col 1.23; 1 Thess 2.9. εὐαγγελίζεσθαι: 1 Cor 9.8; 15.1; 2 Cor 11.7; Gal 1.11; Rev 14.6; *Barn.* 5.9; *Gosp. Mary*, BG 8502 8.18-22; 9.6-10; 18.15-21; cf. *1 Clem* 47.2. ἀκούειν: Acts 15.7; Col 1.23; Eph 1.13.

of Christ," "the Gospel of our Lord," and "Gospel of the Kingdom."[14]

In some early proto-orthodox and "gnostic" texts, the phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ also introduces sayings of Jesus (e.g. *2 Clem.* 8.5; *Did.* 8.2; 15.3, 4), which closely correspond to sayings recorded in now canonical gospels. However, as Campenhausen rightly observes:

> The "Gospel" to which appeal is normally made (in the first two-thirds of the second century), remains an elastic concept, designating the preaching of Jesus as a whole in the form in which it lives on in church tradition. The normative significance of the Lord's words, which is the most important point, . . . is not transferred to the documents that record them.[15]

Even as authors of this time increasingly referenced written sources for their understanding and articulation of the Gospel, their use of the term εὐαγγέλιον conformed to its original Pauline sense, conveying the dynamism and immediacy of the oral proclamation of the Christian message.[16]

The first extant, proto-orthodox use of εὐαγγέλιον to denote a written text occurs in the writings of Justin Martyr.[17] Although Justin usually refers to records of the life and teachings of Jesus as "the memoirs of the apostles" (τὰ ἀπομνημονεύματα τῶν ἀποστόλων) or simply as "the memoirs," he uses the term εὐαγγέλιον three times (*1 Apol* 66.3.2; *Dial.* 10.2; 100.1).[18]

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[14] "Gospel of God": Mark 1.14; Rom 1.1; 15.16; 1 Thes 2.2, 8, 9; 1 Pet 4.17; 1 Tim 1.11. "Gospel of Christ": Rom 15.19; 1 Cor 9.12; 2 Cor 2.12; 9.13; 10.14; Gal 1.7; Phil 1.27; 1 Thes 3.2; also Mark 1.1; Rom 1.9; 2 Thess 1.8; 2 Cor 4.4. "Gospel of our Lord": *Did.* 15.4; see also *Gosp. Truth*, NHC I 18.11-19. "Gospel of the Kingdom": Matt 4.23; 9.35; 24.14; *Gosp. Mary*, BG 8502 8.18-22; 9.6-10.

[15] Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 129; see also Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie* I, 194-96.

[16] Following Gundry, who concludes that: ". . . subapostolic literature borrows from books that became canonical but does not use εὐαγγέλιον for any of those books" ("ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ," 322). Also Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 15, 17-18, 22-23.

[17] The two occurrences of this term in *Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo* are both singular and refer to information as "written in the Gospel." In one case, this phrase is used to introduce a saying of Jesus (*Dial.* 100.1), in a manner consistent with previous usage (e.g. *2 Clem.* 8.5; cf. *1 Apol.* 15-17). In the other, it is placed in the mouth of Trypho, who speaks with disdain of the commandments "in the so-called gospel" (ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ εὐαγγελίῳ; *Dial.* 10.2)—facetiously drawing upon its non-Christian meaning (i.e. "good news") to criticize the contents thereof.

[18] The full phrase "memoirs of the apostles" occurs seven times (*Dial.* 100.4.5; 101.3.7; 102.5.9; 103.6.4; 104.1.10; 106.1.11; 106.4.6), while "memoirs" is used eight times (*1 Apol* 66.3.2, 67.3.3; 103.8.1; 105.1.9; 105.5.6; 105.6.4; 106.3.3; 107.1.2)—although three of these are in sentences where their connection to the "apostles" is clear (e.g. "the apostles, in the memoirs made by them," *1 Apol* 66.3.2; also 67.3.3; *Dial.* 103.8.1).

Most notable is *1 Apol.* 66.3, our earliest evidence for the plural εὐαγγέλια within Christian writings. Appositionally equating the "memoirs of the apostles" with "those which are called gospels" (ἃ καλεῖται εὐαγγέλια; *1 Apol.* 66.3), this passage clearly presupposes an understanding of εὐαγγέλιον as denoting an individual document.

Given the emergence of such a "bookish" meaning to the term εὐαγγέλιον and Justin's own propensity for written sources, it is surprising how few times that he uses the term.[19] Rather, for Justin, εὐαγγέλια appears to have been another designation for the books that he preferred to call ἀπομνημονεύματα.[20] This attests to the increasingly use of εὐαγγέλιον to refer to individual texts, at least by some second century Christians, but also suggests that Justin himself may have avoided this term deliberately.[21] To some degree, his intended audience may have informed this choice, inasmuch as he addresses his apologies to non-Christians (i.e. Romans: *1* and *2 Apology*; Jews: *Dialogue with Trypho*). Nevertheless, Justin most probably meant for his works to educate Christian readers, as well, and thus his selection of terminology cannot be dismissed as theologically insignificant from an intra-Christian perspective.[22]

How, then, can we explain his apparent avoidance of the term εὐαγγέλιον? Here, the challenge of Marcionism may provide the key background.[23] From our sources about Marcion, it seems that he was the first to use εὐαγγέλιον to refer to a book, possibly due to his misinterpretation of Pauline references to "my gospel" (Rom 2.16; 16.25) as referring to a specific document.[24] Claiming to have "reconstructed" the original form of Paul's

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[19] See e.g. Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 40.

[20] Indeed, in *Dial.* 10.2.4, εὐαγγέλιον is used in a negative manner by Trypho ("the so-called gospel;" see above). In *1 Apol.* 66.3, Justin explains that the "memoirs" were also called (καλεῖται) "gospels," thereby informing his audience of their common identification, while avoiding a direct equation of the two. Indeed, Otto Piper suggests that "the very fact that (Justin) uses the neutral expression 'they are called' rather than 'we call them' can be interpreted only as an indication of his unwillingness to adopt such terminology himself." ("The Nature of the Gospel according to Justin Martyr," *Journal of Religion* 41:3 [1961] 155).

[21] Piper, "Nature of the Gospel," 155, 162-63; Charles H. Cosgrove, "Justin Martyr and the emerging Christian canon: Observations on the purpose and destination of the *Dialogue with Trypho*," *Vigiliae Christianae* 36 (1982) 221-23.

[22] Cosgrove, "Justin Martyr," 209-19.

[23] See Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 37-39; Cosgrove, "Justin Martyr," 225. On Justin's involvement in the Marcionite controversy, see *1 Apol* 26.5-8 (also 58.1; *Dial.* 35.6); Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.6.9; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.11.8.

[24] Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 3.5.4; Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 35-37; Campenhausen,

"gospel" by excising the allegedly Jewish emendations from the Gospel of Luke, Marcion and his followers appear to have furthermore claimed that this book was the "Gospel"—with all the totalizing epistemological ramifications of the original Pauline sense of the term.[25]

In many ways, Irenaeus stands in profound continuity with Justin, especially insofar as he explicitly cites apostolic prooftexts alongside the sayings of Jesus.[26] Together with his defense of the textual authority of the four gospels, this might lead us to expect that Irenaeus would similarly eschew the orally oriented meaning of εὐαγγέλιον for its newer, "bookish" meaning. Some occurrences of this term in *Adversus haereses* do indeed conform to this sense—most notably in his defense of the four now canonical gospels in *Adv. haer.* 3.11.7-9. However, when one surveys all of the examples of Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον in *Adversus haereses* and contextualizes them within the entire range of its previous meanings, one finds an interesting interplay between oral and textual connotations.

This polysemy proves significant. Most notably, it cautions us against the cursory conclusion that, with Irenaeus, we find the decisive shift in the Christian use of εὐαγγέλιον from an original, oral meaning to a later, textualized meaning—thereby reflecting some pivotal transition from the charisma of the earliest churches to the canonical consciousness of emerging orthodoxy.[27] Furthermore, it suggests that we should approach our consideration of this important term with a more sophisticated model of the development of lexemes, in which semantic fields emerge through the con-

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Formation of the Christian Canon, 153-56, esp. 155; Oscar Cullmann, *The Early Church* (London: SCM, 1956) 48.

[25] Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5.2; Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 159-61; Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 92.

[26] Le Boulluec, "L'Écriture comme norme hérésiologique," 68-73 (see also *La notion d'hérésie* I, 157-58, 215-17); Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 182. According to one estimate, Irenaeus quotes 626 passages from the gospels, 54 from Acts, 280 from Pauline Epistles, 15 from Catholic Epistles, and 29 from Revelation (Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*, 154).

[27] E.g. Richard Heard, who asserts that: "The transition is complete from Papias' preference for the 'living and abiding voice' to Irenaeus' four gospels, neither more or less, 'as there are four zones of the world in which we live'" ("The ἀπομνημονεύματα in Papias, Justin, and Ireneaus," *New Testament Studies* 1 [1954] 129; see also "Papias' Quotations from the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 1 [1954] 134). Also Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien*, 51; Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 182; McDonald, *Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 164-65). Metzger places this transition from oral to written at the time of Papias (*Canon of the New Testament*, 52-56).

tinual interaction of multiple meanings and connotations, both old and new, in a manner persistently informed by wider cultural contexts.

Just as an analysis of Paul's adoption, specialization, and transformation of the term εὐαγγέλιον from its pre-Christian meaning must factor in attendant issues, such as the contemporaneous delineation of a distinctly Christian identity, so an examination of the later addition of a "bookish" meaning to this term must acknowledge the manner in which Marcionite polemics may have shaped its connotations. Such considerations prove especially relevant for an analysis of Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον, since the two specialized Christian meanings that had been established at his time have profoundly different epistemological ramifications: Paul's Gospel invokes a dynamic, living Christian truth, whose orality stands in an essential contrast to writings.[28] However, Marcion's project of compiling one true gospel document tacitly equates the quest for the Christian truth with the isolation of authentically apostolic written records from the distorting accretions of tradition.[29]

In contrast to Justin's avoidance of the term, Irenaeus uses εὐαγγέλιον (Latin, *evangelium*) 101 times in the five books of *Adversus haereses*.[30] Of these, only seven occurrences are plural (2.22.3; 3.11.7, 11.8 [twice], 11.9 [thrice]).[31]

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[28] See Kelber, *Oral and Written Gospel*, 143-59; Perkins, "Spirit and Letter," 310-18.

[29] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 63-65.

[30] My count follows the critical editions of the five books of *Adversus haereses* in the Sources Chrétiennes series (*Adversus haereses. Contre les hérésies*, livres I-V, A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, et al., eds. [SC 100, 151, 152, 210, 211, 263, 264, 293, 294; Paris: Cerf, 1969, 1974, 1979, 1982]). Note that there are at least six more occurrences of this term in the Latin, which the editors have judged to be additions to the original Greek, as reconstructed from the Greek fragments and Armenian translation (i.e. 2.27.2; 4.2.3, 12.3, 20.6, 29.1, 32.1). Also, there are three other times that the related adjective εὐαγγελικοῦ is used (i.e. 1.3.6; 2.27.2; 3.10.5).

[31] This point is also noted by Yves Blanchard (*Aux Sources du Canon, Le Témoignage d'Irénée* [Paris: Cerf, 1993] 151-52), who briefly surveys Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον (pp. 151-64) within the context of a wider inquiry into the formation of the Christian Canon. Although Blanchard is correct to highlight the continued importance of oral Church traditions for Irenaeus (pp. 165-72), she then goes on to argue for his continued use of oral Gospel sources, similar to those that allegedly underlie our Gospel of Matthew (pp. 212-29). From the limited evidence that she presents, such a conclusion seems quite strained (so also William Schoedel who, in his review of Blanchard's work, describes this hypothesis as "a largely sound point of view carried to an unacceptable extreme" [*Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 [1995] 171]). In my view, the continued interplay between orality and textuality within Irenaeus' thought must be contextualized within his hermeneutics and epistemology, as well as the manner in which his rhetoric is shaped by

Like Justin's use of εὐαγγέλια in *1 Apol.* 66.3, these clearly presuppose a "bookish" meaning. However, it remains questionable whether these examples can be taken as wholly characteristic of Irenaeus' understanding of εὐαγγέλιον. Indeed, the great majority (94) of the occurrences of εὐαγγέλιον are singular, and all but one of the plural examples cluster in a single section. Not surprisingly, this section is Irenaeus' famous defense of the textual authority of the four now canonical gospels in *Adv. haer.* 3.11.7-9.

Indeed, there is no question that Irenaeus is familiar with the "bookish" sense of εὐαγγέλιον. Together with the seven plural examples, the term also occurs eight times in *Adversus haereses* within the quoted titles of texts. Six of these refer to the four authoritative gospel documents (Matthew: 1.26.2; 3.11.7; Mark: 3.11.7; Luke: 1.27.2; 3.12.12; John: 3.11.9; see also 3.11.7), while two refer to heretical texts, namely the "Gospel of Judas" (1.31.1) and the "Gospel of Truth" (3.11.9). On the one hand, this evidence attests to the addition of titles to these texts by the late second century.[32] On the other hand, it is notable that every use of this term within book titles, whether of authoritative or heretical texts, occurs within passages about heretical attitudes towards these documents.[33] Specifically, these concern the heretical preference for a single gospel (thrice; 1.26.2; 3.11.7), the heretical rejection of a gospel (once; 3.11.9), and the heretical redaction of a gospel (twice; 3.11.7, 12.12). Given this context, it is possible that

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heresiological aims. Viewed in this context, the oral tradition that necessary complements the written gospels, for Irenaeus, does not appear to denote non-written gospel traditions, but rather the core beliefs that unify the Church, which serve as a criterion for the proper interpretation of Scripture, as distilled in the "Rule of Truth received in baptism."

[32] See Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995) 153-54; Stanton, "Fourfold Gospel," 333; Koester, "From the Kerygma-Gospel to Written Gospels," 373. However, it is interesting to note that Irenaeus always cites the titles of the canonical gospels in a bracketed structure (e.g. τῷ κατὰ Ματθαῖον εὐαγγελίῳ, 3.11.7; τὸ . . . κατὰ Λουκᾶν εὐαγγέλιον, 3.12.12), instead of the structure more familiar from book titles (i.e. εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ . . .; as in P66 and P75). This may be linked to his use of this same pattern in citations of the Law as the "Law according to Moses" (e.g. τόν . . . κατὰ Μωϋσέα νόμον, 3.12.11; τῆς κατὰ Μωϋσέα νομοθεσίας, 3.12.12).

[33] Referring to the four canonical gospels elsewhere, Irenaeus simply uses the formula τὸ κατὰ . . . ("the one according to . . ."; see e.g. 3.11.8). By assuming but not explicitly stating εὐαγγέλιον, the effect is not that of a title *per se* (i.e. "The Gospel According To . . ."), but rather the more literal sense of a single Gospel *according to* various authors. Note also 3.11.1, in which Irenaeus introduces a quotation from John 1.1 by stating that John thus "commenced his teaching (διδασκαλίας) according to (κατά) the Gospel."

these examples may simply reflect common usage, particularly among the groups whose textual preferences Irenaeus here cites.

Irenaeus' own comments about the relationship between orality, textuality, and the Christian truth further highlight the need to consider his statements about the "gospels" in the context of his beliefs about the "Gospel."[34] For instance, in 3.2.1, Irenaeus reproaches the heretics for asserting that the truth "was not transmitted (παραδεδόσθαι) by means of writings (γραμμάτων), but rather through the living voice (ζώσης φωνῆς)." The language is strongly reminiscent of Papias' statement that he prefers "the living and abiding voice (ζώσης φωνῆς καὶ μενούσης)" to "things from books (τὰ ἐκ τῶν βιβλίων; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.29.4)," appearing to imply that Irenaeus rejects oral transmission as less reliable than writing. However, he subsequently responds to the heretics' error, not by appealing to Scripture, but rather by lauding the Church's own oral tradition, which originated with the apostles and is "preserved by means of the succession of presbyters (κατὰ τὰς διαδοχὰς τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 3.2.2)."

Consequently, it becomes clear that his critique of the heretic's appeal to oral traditions is not based on the orality of these traditions.[35] On the

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[34] Moreover, there are several cases in which there appear to be variances in the use of this term between the extant Latin and the probable form of the original Greek, as reconstructed in by the editors of the Sources Chrétiennes critical edition of *Adversus haereses*. For instance, in the comparison of Gen 1.3 and John 1.3 at *Adv. haer.* 4.32.1, the Greek version seems to have paralleled what Moses says (καὶ Μωϋσῆς φησιν . . .) with what the Gospel says (καὶ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον {sc. φησιν} . . .). However, the Latin translation seems to have expanded the latter portion of this passage, by introducing the quotation with the phrase *Et in Evangelio legimus* ("And in the Gospel, we read . . ."). Similarly, at 4.2.3, the Greek seems to have introduced a quotation from John 5.46-47 with the phrase καθὼς ὁ Ιωάννης ἐμνημόνευσεν, evoking the use of this verb by both Papias and Justin to stress the role of memory in ensuring the accuracy of transmission. However, these connotations are dulled by the Latin translation, which adds *in Evangelio*. Consequently, the focus is taken away from John, as a direct witness to the teachings of Jesus, and placed instead upon the document that he recorded. These subtle changes from an oral sense of εὐαγγέλιον to a more textual sense are highlighted by a more obvious variant at 4.20.6. Here, the original Greek version seems to have introduced a saying of Jesus from John 1.18 with the phrase καθὼς ὁ Κύριος φησίν ("As the Lord said . . ."). However, the Latin translation introduces this quotation with the formula *Quemadmodum in Evangelio scriptum est* ("As it is written in the Gospel . . ."). The result is a striking shift from an appeal to the oral authority of Jesus' words to an appeal to the textual authority of a written gospel. Although the state of the manuscript tradition for *Adversus haereses* makes it impossible to reconstruct the original Greek with full confidence, these possibilities remain quite intriguing.

[35] Contra Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien*, 51-52.

contrary, Irenaeus answers their claims about the apostolic origins thereof, by arguing that the Church alone preserves the authentic traditions (see e.g. 1.10.2; 3.4.1, 24.1; 4.26.2; 5.20.1-2). For Irenaeus, the difference lies not in the contrast between reliable written sources and unreliable oral channels of transmission, but between the public proclamations of the true Church and the false esotericism of the heretics. Oral tradition may be faulted insofar as it provides a means for heretics to claim apostolic authority for their secret teachings (e.g. 1.25.3-5), but it is lauded insofar as it unifies even illiterate Christian communities under a single Rule of Truth (3.4.1).[36]

It is also notable that the "proof" for the unique authority of exactly four gospels in 3.11.8 seems rather uncharacteristic of Irenaeus' usual mode of argumentation.[37] Throughout his genealogy of heresy in Book I and his defense of the unity of God in Book II, Irenaeus cites numerous examples of heretics using numerological interpretations to attempt to access hidden cosmic truths.[38] Often, he ridicules this method for its faulty logic. For instance, in 2.24-25, Irenaeus mocks the heretics' method of exegesis, asserting that:

> . . . when any number coincides with their assertions, (they) affirm that it was a type of the things in the Pleroma; while in fact every number occurs with the utmost variety in the Scriptures, so that, should any one desire it, he might form not only an Ogdoad and a Decad and a Duodecad, but any sort of number, from the Scriptures (2.24.3).

Giving the example of the number five, he playfully notes how many important words have five letters (e.g. σωτήρ, πατήρ, ἀγάπη); how Jesus blessed five loaves to fed five thousand men; how there were five wise and five foolish virgins; how we have five fingers, five senses, five internal organs, five parts, five periods of life, five books of the Torah, and so on.

He concludes that such logic is meaningless, since one could find "many

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[36] See Benoit, "Écriture et Tradition," 41-43; Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom*, 30, 38, 85-86.

[37] Cf. Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 101.

[38] Examples include the Valentinians' numerological interpretation of parables and the details of Jesus' life to conclude that there were 30 aeons (1.1.3; 2.22.1, 25.1); Marcus' theories about the significance of the number of letters in the alphabet and the numbers associated with the respective letters (1.14.5); the Marcosians' deduction of the invisible Decad from the 10 natural powers (1.17.1); Basilides' connection of the 365 days in a year with the 365 heavens (1.24.3; 2.16.2); and interpretations of the 12 apostles in terms of 12 aeons (2.24-25).

thousand other things of the same kind, both with respect to this number and any other one might chose to fix upon, either from the Scriptures or from works of Nature" (2.24.4; see also 2.*praef*.1, 14.6, 15.2, 16.4, 26.2).[39] However, in Book III, Irenaeus similarly adduces numbers from Nature and Scripture to argue for the unique significance of the number four. In order to "prove" there cannot be more or less than four sacred gospels, he cites the "four zones of the world in which we live," the "four principal winds," the four cherubim upon which the Logos is enthroned (c.f. Rev 4.7; Ezek 10.14), and the four principal covenants given to the human race (i.e. Adamic, Noachide, Mosaic, Gospel; see also 5.9.4).[40]

As these examples illustrate, much of the difficulty in understanding *Adversus haereses* roots in the fact that it is an extremely complex work, interweaving a variety of arguments and rhetorical stances.[41] In attempting to use an analysis of Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον to explore the relationship between oral and textual authority in *Adversus Haereses*, it is thus necessary to proceed with some caution. One could easily select different examples that would occasion different conclusions.[42] My analysis of this term will thus attempt to survey all of the occurrences within this work. Here, my aim is to locate Irenaeus' uses of this term in their relevant syntactical, thematic, and rhetorical contexts, thereby enabling us to map the parameters of its polysemy, before exploring the ramifications thereof. Towards this goal, I will attempt to adopt a maximally neutral criterion to structure my analysis, by grouping the 101 occurrences of this term according

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[39] Interestingly, in 2.14.6, Irenaeus attributes the origins of such fallacies to the Pythagoreans.

[40] Despite the disdain with which many scholars have approached Irenaeus' own numerological arguments (as exemplified by Cullmann's treatment of this passage under the subtitle "The False Reasons for the Fourfold Gospel propounded by Irenaeus"; *The Early Church*, 51-52), his examples are far from arbitrary—even if his method strays from his comments in Book I. For instance, as D. Jeffrey Bingham observes, Irenaeus' appeal to the four zones of the world and four winds highlights the important geographical ramifications of the Gospel's quadriform unity, paralleling his account of the emergence of the dispersed Church from the singular witness of the apostles in 3.1.1 (*Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel in Adversus Haereses* [Traditio Exegetica Graeca 7; Louvain: Peeters, 1998] 78-79).

[41] See e.g. Pheme Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics: Rhetoric and Composition in *Adversus Haereses* Book I," *Vigiliae Christianae* 30 (1976) 194-98; William Schoedel, "Philosophy and Rhetoric in the *Adversus Haereses* of Irenaeus," *Vigiliae Christianae* 13 (1959) 28-31.

[42] Benoit makes a similar point with respect to the methodological problems inherent in extrapolating Irenaeus' view of the relationship of Scripture and Tradition simply from selected passages read in isolation ("Écriture et Tradition," 32).

to their grammatical function. Hence, the next section of my inquiry will proceed in five stages, surveying Irenaeus' use of the term εὐαγγέλιον: [1] as a direct object, [2] as a subject with active verbs or a dativa agent with passive verbs, [3] in the phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, [4] in genitival constructions, and [5] in predicate statements.

Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον *in* Adversus Haereses

εὐαγγέλιον *as a direct object*

The majority of times that εὐαγγέλιον occurs in *Adversus haereses* (23 times) it functions as the direct object within a sentence or clause. These examples can be categorized by their subjects: [1] apostles and/or evangelists (8 times), [2] heretics (11 times), [3] an unspecified or generalized subject (twice), and [4] Christ/Logos (twice).

In eight cases, the apostles or evangelists function as the subjects, either as a group or individually. Of these, there are three instances in which Irenaeus describes the Gospel as written, recorded, or published by specific evangelists. In one case, he uses the term εὐαγγέλιον to denote a single document, stating that John "did himself issue (ἐξέδωκεν) the Gospel, during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (3.1.1).[43] In contrast, while describing the origin of Luke's work in the same passage, Irenaeus states that:

> Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book (κατέθετο ἐν βίβλῳ) the Gospel that was preached (κηρυσσόμενον) by that man (i.e. Paul; 3.1.1).

Although the term εὐαγγέλιον here occurs in the context of the composition of a book (βίβλος), it does not denote the book *per se*. Rather, it refers to the message that was preached by Paul, a message whose apostolic origin accounts for the true content of the book and legitimizes its authority.[44] As such, Irenaeus' usage is here more consistent with the NT uses of this term with the verb κηρύσσειν (see examples above) and with Pauline references to "my gospel" (τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου; Rom 2.16; 6.25; also

[43] For ἐκδίδωμι in the sense of "putting out" or "publishing," especially books, see Isoc. 5.11, Aristot. *Poet*. 1454b18, Plu. *Rom*. 8. Interestingly, in the NT, this term occurs only in parables within the Synoptic Gospels, with the meaning "to lease" (Matt 21.33; 21.41; Mark 12.1; Luke 20.9).

[44] See Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 64-65. Indeed, it is likely that Irenaeus particularly stresses the authority of the Gospel of Luke because other Christians of his time rejected it, due to its association with heretics such as Marcion (Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 102-4).

2 Tim 2.8) or "our gospel" (τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἡμῶν; 2 Cor 4.3; 1 Thess 1.5; 2 Thess 2.14), than with the later understanding of εὐαγγέλιον as denoting a single text.[45] This is consistent with his subsequent description of the origins of the Gospel of Mark, which includes no reference to either a gospel or the Gospel, but merely states that Mark "handed down to us in writing (ἐγγράφως ἡμῖν παραδέδωκεν) those things that had been preached by Peter (τὰ ὑπὸ Πέτρου κηρυσσόμενα)." Even as Irenaeus describes the origin of these four authoritative gospels, he retains the earlier emphasis on the Gospel as the oral preaching of the apostles, legitimizing these texts through appeals to apostolic authority that remain couched in the traditional rhetoric of orality.[46]

In four other cases, Irenaeus' use of εὐαγγέλιον more obviously conforms to an orally oriented sense of this term. Consistent with the most common NT use of εὐαγγέλιον to denote a message of Christian truth as orally preached, he here describes the Gospel as something that is announced (κατηγγελκέναι, 3.12.12; ἀπαγγεῖλαι, 3.14.1) and proclaimed (κηρύσσειν, 3.1.1 [2]).[47] In three of these cases, the subject of the preaching is either an apostle or the apostles as a group. However, in one case, Irenaeus refers to the evangelist Luke, who:

> . . . always preached together (συγκηρύξας) with Paul and was called "beloved" by him and, after preaching (εὐαγγελισάμενος) with him, was entrusted (πιστευθείς) to announce (ἀπαγγεῖλαι) to us the Gospel (3.14.1).

Here, it is again tempting to understand εὐαγγέλιον as a text, especially in light of the assertion in 3.1.1 that Luke wrote a book recording the preaching of Paul. However, a similar use of the passive form of πιστεύειν with εὐαγγέλιον is attested in Gal 2.7, 1 Thess 2.4, and 1 Tim 1.11, with decisively oral connotations. As in these verses, it is thus probable that Irenaeus here focuses, not upon the form of the Gospel, but rather upon the authority to preach it.

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[45] The extent of Paul's influence upon *Adversus haereses* has recently been demonstrated by Rolf Noormann's comprehensive study, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret: Zur Rezeption und Wirkung der paulinischen und deuteropaulinischen Briefe im Werk des Irenäus von Lyon* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994).

[46] Bingham, for instance, describes 3.1.1 as one of the key passages in Book III in which "Irenaeus presents his view of the relationship of the four written Gospels to the one apostolic Gospel" (*Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 63).

[47] For εὐαγγέλιον with κατηγγελκέναι see 1 Cor 9.4. For εὐαγγέλιον with κηρύσσειν see Matt 4.23; 9.35; 24.14; 26.13; Mark 1.14; 13.10; 14.9; 16.15; Gal 2.2; Col 1.23; 1 Thess 2.9.

Moreover, the immediate context is important to note. In 3.14, Irenaeus attempts to prove that Paul could not have transmitted secret teachings unbeknownst to either Luke or his other hearers. Hence, this statement is not intended to recount the origin of the Gospel of Luke. Rather, it cites the evangelist Luke's collaborative preaching with the apostle Paul, in order simultaneously [1] to defend the authority and trustworthiness of the non-apostolic Luke by appealing to the apostle Paul and [2] to prove the non-heretical nature of Paul's teachings by appealing to Luke.[48]

A similar interaction of meanings is evident in the cases where the evangelists are described as "transmitting" (παραδιδόναι) the Gospel (i.e. 1.27.2; 3.1.1.; 3.5.1; 3.11.9; cf. 4.34.1). Most notable is 3.1.1, in which Irenaeus explains the relationship between the oral preaching of the Gospel and written apostolic records in historical terms. He recounts that the Church learned about the plan of salvation

> . . . from those through whom the Gospel has come down (κατήντηκεν) to us, which they once (τότε) proclaimed (ἐκήρυξαν) and, later (ὕστερον), according to the will of God, transmitted to us in writings (ἐν γραφαῖς παρέδωκαν ἡμῖν), to become the ground and pillar of our faith (θεμέλιον καὶ στῦλον τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν γενησόμενον).

As in 3.11.8, the "ground and pillar of our faith" refers not to the writings, but to the Gospel itself (see also 4.21.3; 1 Tim 3.15). Although this diachronic schema well articulates the origins of these two modes of transmission, it does not preclude a synchronic relationship between the writings of the evangelists and the oral traditions continually preserved in the Church.[49]

However, Irenaeus concludes his consideration of the four gospels in 3.11.7-9 with the statement that:

> Having therefore investigated the opinion of those who have transmitted the Gospel to us (τῶν παραδεδωκότων ἡμῖν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) from their beginnings (ἐκ τῶν ἀρχῶν αὐτῶν), let us proceed also to the remaining apostles . . . (3.11.9).

This statement implies two distinct categories: [1] those who handed down the Gospel and [2] the other apostles. Previous to this statement,

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[48] See A. C. Sundberg, "Dependent Canonicity in Irenaeus and Tertullian," SE III, edited by F. L. Cross (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964) 403-4; Hahneman, *Muratorian Fragment*, 102-3; Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret*, 47-52.

[49] For instance, Bingham reads this passage as denoting that that the oral preaching of Peter and Paul was synchronous with the emergence of the written record of Matthew (*Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 71-76).

Irenaeus discussed the apostles Matthew (3.9, 11.8) and John (3.11.1-6, 8), Mark as the recorder of teaching of the apostle Peter (3.10.5, 11.8), and Luke as the recorder of the teaching of the apostle Paul (3.10.1-4, 11.8). Immediately after this statement, he discusses the teachings of Peter (3.12.1-7), Phillip (3.12.8), Paul (3.12.9), and Stephen (3.12.10).

If only the former group "transmitted the Gospel," this implies that εὐαγγέλιον here denotes the four authoritative gospels, as a single textual unit or collection. A similar understanding of this term seems to inform 3.5.1, in which Irenaeus states:

> . . . let us revert (ἐπανέλθωμεν) to the proof from the writings of the apostles who had written the Gospel (εἰς τὴν ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν τῶν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον συγγεγραφότων ἀποστόλων ἀπόδειξιν), in which they recorded (ἀνέγραψαν) the teaching regarding God.

Here, as in 3.11.9, the Gospel to which he refers is clearly written and is composed of more than one text. Consequently, these examples appear to attest to a singular use of εὐαγγέλιον to denote multiple texts. This represents an interesting hybridization between the Pauline and Marcionite meanings of this term, referring either to a single collection composed of multiple books or to multiple books that together express a single message—an issue that we will further consider below, in the context of his defense of the "four-formed Gospel" in 3.11.7-9.

In addition, there are 11 times in *Adversus haereses* in which heretics occur as the subjects of sentences or clauses with εὐαγγέλιον as a direct object. These present an important complement to the use of this term in the context of the apostles, since Irenaeus here describes the Gospel by surveying the different ways in which it can be rejected. The majority of these concern Marcion and his followers (1.27.2; 3.11.9 [2], 14.4 [3]; 4.34.1, 29.1), while the remainder concern the Montanists (3.11.9) and Valentinians (2.22.3; 3.11.9; also 3.14.4).

The eight passages about the Marcionites and the Gospel prove particularly relevant, because Marcion himself probably used the term εὐαγγέλιον to denote the written gospel that he constructed by excising parts of the Gospel of Luke. One example, 1.27.2, occurs in the context of an introductory summary of Marcionite beliefs in the genealogy of heresy in Book I. Here, Irenaeus states that Marcion abridged (*circumcidens*) the Gospel of Luke (see also 3.12.12) and persuaded his followers that he was more trustworthy than the "apostles, who transmitted (*tradiderunt*) the Gospel." Irenaeus therefore denounces Marcion, because he "transmitted (*tradens*), not the Gospel, but only a little piece (*particulam*) of the Gospel (1.27.2)." What

exactly is the "Gospel" of which Marcion transmits only a "little piece"? On the one hand, this statement is followed by the assertion that Marcion cut (*abscidit*) the letters of Paul, thus implying that εὐαγγέλιον refers specifically to the Gospel of Luke. On other hand, his contrast between the apostles, who truly transmitted (*tradiderunt*) the Gospel, and Marcion, who only transmitted a little piece of it, suggests that "Gospel" may here be a more inclusive category.

For instance, in his critique of Marcion in 3.11.9, Irenaeus uses the term to refer to the totality of authentic written gospels, a meaning that he had established in the previous passage with his defense of the "four-formed Gospel" (3.11.8). After asserting that those who do not accept exactly four gospels "destroy the form of the Gospel," Irenaeus accuses Marcion of "rejecting the entire Gospel (ὅλον ἀποβάλλων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον) and thus "cutting himself off from (ἀποκόπτων) the Gospel." Consequently, it becomes clear that Irenaeus here focuses, not upon Marcion's abridgement of the Gospel of Luke, but rather on his simultaneous rejection of the other three gospels—or, more accurately, the other three forms of the "four-formed Gospel."[50]

In the same passage, Irenaeus asserts that the Montanists "simultaneously set aside (ἀπωθοῦνται) both the Gospel and the prophetic Spirit," by rejecting one face (ἰδέαν) of the Gospel, namely the Gospel of John. This sense of εὐαγγέλιον, as the one Gospel with four written faces or forms, is also implied in 4.34.1, in which Irenaeus exhorts the Marcionites to "carefully read (ἀναγνῶτε ἀκριβῶς)" both "the prophets" and "Gospel which has been given (δεδομένον) to us by the apostles." Both the explicit mention of reading and the parallel between these two categories make it clear that εὐαγγέλιον here refers to the "four-formed Gospel" of 3.11.8.

As in 1.27.2, there is nonetheless some difficulty in distinguishing between [1] the "bookish" use of εὐαγγέλιον, as implied in the assertion that Marcion rejects the Gospel of Luke by discarding parts of it, and [2] the use of εὐαγγέλιον to denote the single Gospel in its four written aspects, as implied in the assertion that Marcion rejects the Gospel by rejecting three of the

[50] Although Irenaeus claims that Marcion "not only 'mutilated' Luke, but also malevolently scorned the other gospels," the evidence about Marcion from both Irenaeus and Tertullian seems to suggest that "Marcion's direct polemic was aimed only at the apostles and at the apostolic preaching of the gospel (cf. *Adv. haer.* I, 27, 3; III, 2, 2; 13, 1f), not against individual gospels, much less a 'Four-Gospel canon'" (Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 157).

four gospels. An examination of 3.14.4 suggests that this ambiguity may root in Marcion's own claims about his gospel and the Gospel: The Marcionites boast that they "possess" (ἔχειν) the Gospel in their abridged Gospel of Luke, but they in fact possess no Gospel at all.[51]

When arguing against the Valentinians, Irenaeus seems to use the term εὐαγγέλιον in a more general sense. For instance, in 3.11.9, after denouncing both the Marcionites and Montanists for rejecting individual gospels, he asserts that the Valentinians' acceptance of the "Gospel of Truth" results in their possession of no authentic Gospel at all (3.11.9).[52] However, he does not root this assertion only in the number of gospels that they accept. Instead, he focuses upon the content of the "Gospel of Truth," stating several times that it does not agree with the "gospels of the apostles." Moreover, in his discussion of their equation of the 30 years of Jesus' life with the 30 aeons (see also 1.1.3; 2.25.1), he rejects the Valentinian exegesis and declares that they must "reject (*reprobare*) either their explanation or the Gospel" (2.22.3). The "Gospel" that the Valentinians reject thus does not seem to be only a group of uniquely authoritative texts, as for the Marcionites. Rather, it also pertains to their method of reading and interpreting such texts.[53]

This contrast is nicely illustrated by 3.14.4, which refers to both groups. After denouncing the Marcionites' abridgment of the Gospel of Luke and the Valentinians' allegorical interpretation, Irenaeus suggests that they both could repent, if they only devoted themselves (προσεχόντας) to "the complete Gospel (ὁλοτελεῖ . . . τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ)" and "the teaching of the apostles (τῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων διδαχῇ)."[54] In light of the preceding comments about Marcion, it seems that the Marcionites must adopt the "complete Gospel," in the sense of the "four-formed Gospel"; they must accept both the remainder of the Gospel of Luke and the other three gospels. However, the Valentinians must embrace the "complete Gospel," in the sense of the

[51] Contrast 3.1.1, in which the apostles are said to "all equally and individually possess (ἔχοντες) the Gospel of God," after the resurrection of Jesus and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them.

[52] Literally: "so that there is not for them a non-blasphemous Gospel" (ἵνα μηδὲ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ᾖ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἀβλασφήμητον).

[53] On his approach to the Valentinians' specific brand of so-called "evil exegesis," particularly with reference to their interpretation of the Gospel of John, see Pagels, "Irenaeus, the 'Canon of Truth,' and the Gospel of John."

[54] The wording here is especially reminiscent of Ignatius, *Smyrn.* 7.2: προσέχειν δὲ τοῖς προφήταις, ἐξαιρέτως δὲ τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ. . . .

written gospels as interpreted in consonance with the "teaching of the apostles."

The latter phrase proves particularly significant, because it elsewhere denotes apostolic traditions that were faithfully preserved by the Church, not only through the transmission of texts, but also through oral channels (3.12.11; 3.15.1; 4.33.8). Often associated with the tradition of the presbyters (3.2.2; 4.26.4; also 2.22.5; 4.26.2, 27.1), these teachings are elsewhere mentioned in the specific context of textual exegesis (4.33.8; also 3.12.11; 4.32.1)—most notably in 4.32.1, where Irenaeus exhorts his readers to "attentively read (ἀκριβῶς ἀναγνῷ) the Scriptures with the presbyters (πρεσβυτέροις) in the Church, among whom is the apostolic teaching (τὸ ἀποστολικὸν διδασκαλεῖον)."[55]

Just as the authentic apostolic tradition consists of written and oral components, so the heretical rejection of that tradition can involve either false writings or false interpretations. Marcion possesses no Gospel, due to his rejection of certain texts and passages (3.14.4), but the Valentinians have "no unblasphemous Gospel" (3.11.9) in a wider sense. In denouncing the latter, Irenaeus draws upon a more inclusive sense of the term εὐαγγέλιον than the "bookish" meanings that he invokes in the context of Marcionites and Montanists, namely, as the totality of the Christian message, transmitted in both written documents and oral traditions—and especially oral traditions about the proper manner to read those documents.

There are four remaining examples of Irenaeus' use of the term εὐαγγέλιον as a direct object in *Adversus haereses*. Twice this term is used with an unspecified or generalized subject. The first (4.37.4) depicts the Gospel as something that one chooses to follow (ἕπεσθαι) of one's own free will, evoking the use of εὐαγγέλιον to denote a way of life in Phil 1.27, 2 Cor 9.13, 2 Thess 1.8, and 1 Pet 4.17. The second (3.14.3) presents a generalized restatement of the sentiments that Irenaeus elsewhere expresses about Marcion and his followers: Anyone who denies the trustworthiness of Luke's testimony essentially "rejects (ἐκβάλλων) that Gospel of which he claims to be a disciple," because the Gospel of Luke teaches us "many important parts of the Gospel." The rejection of any part of the Gospel is essentially

[55] See Jeffrey Sobosan, "The Role of the Presbyter: An Investigation into the *Adversus Haereses* of Saint Irenaeus," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 27 (1974) 143-46; also Johannes Munck, "Presbyters and Disciples of The Lord in Papias," *Harvard Theological Review* 52 (1959) 229-30, 233-36.

a rejection of its entirety, precisely because each part communicates unique and essential aspects thereof.

There are also two statements with a divine subject, which explain aspects of the Gospel in terms of the agency of Christ-Logos. In 4.35.2, after rejecting the Valentinian distinction between different degrees of truth in the Scriptures (4.35.1; cp. Ptolemy, *Letter to Flora*), Irenaeus argues that "the Savior . . . preached (ἐκήρυξεν) the Gospel to us" by the means of both the prophets and the apostles. Similarly, in 3.11.8, when developing his concept of the "four-formed Gospel," Irenaeus emphasizes that the Logos, who metaphorically sits enthroned upon the four authoritative gospels, is also the one who "gave (ἔδωκεν) us the four-formed Gospel" (3.11.8). Just as the Logos is responsible for the oral preaching of his Gospel, so he is the ultimate source for its four-fold manifestation in written form.

The phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ

The second major category of examples is represented by Irenaeus' use of the phrase ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, which occurs 12 times in *Adversus haereses*.[56] In one case, 3.14.1, this phrase functions as part of a wider idiom: Irenaeus describes Luke as συνεργὸς ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ("a fellow-laborer in the Gospel") with Paul, consistent with previous Pauline usage (see e.g. 1 Thess 3.2; Phil 4.3; Phlm 1.24). Elsewhere, the phrase is used in four ways: [1] to cite historical information (4 times), [2] to cite a doctrine (once), [3] to introduce sayings of Jesus (4 times), and [4] to introduce quotations from the Johannine prologue (twice).

The first category evokes Justin Martyr's use of ἀπομνημονεύματα as a source for historical information related to the life of Jesus. Irenaeus, however, does not specify whether this information is recorded in books or whether it belongs to oral traditions about the apostolic era, as preserved by the presbyters and transmitted through the Church. These passages only note that certain people or events are "announced" (κηρυσσομένης; 1.8.4), are "named" (*denominatis*; 2.20.4), or simply "are" (εἶναι; 1.7.4) in the Gospel.

The second category parallels Justin's use of the term εὐαγγέλιον in *Dial.* 10.2.4, insofar as it refers to commandments "in the Gospel." In contrast to Trypho's disparaging comments, Irenaeus positively compares that which is in the law (ἐν τῷ . . . νόμῳ) and in the Gospel (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ), namely,

[56] Note that the Latin seems to read *in Evangelio* five additional times, namely at *Adv. haer.* 3.11.1, 4.2.3, 4.20.6, 4.29.1, and 4.32.1. See note above.

the commandment to love the Lord God with one's whole heart (4.12.3). Although νόμος clearly refers to writings, εὐαγγέλιον may not. Indeed, similar comparisons of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον with ὁ νόμος, οἱ προφῆται, and τὰ ἀρχεῖα occur in the letters of Ignatius, with the aim of drawing a contrast between codified, written Law and living, oral Gospel (*Smyrn.* 5.1; 7.2; *Phld.* 8.2).[57]

The third category includes the four other passages in which the phrase is used to introduce sayings of Jesus that correspond to sayings recorded in now canonical gospels (1.20.2; 2.26.2; 3.23.3; 5.22.1).[58] One of these is rather neutral, introducing a saying by stating that it "occurs" (κειμένων) in the Gospel (1.20.2). The remainder use the rhetoric of speech, either without a subject (*dictum sit*; 2.26.2) or with Christ as the subject (ὁ Κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγέλίῳ . . . φησίν, 3.23.3; ὁ Λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ . . . ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ . . . ῥήσεις, 5.22.1). This language is striking, insofar as it is more consistent with the use of this term to denote a whole body of tradition in the *Didache* (8.2; 15.3, 4) and *2 Clement* (8.5), than in the works of Justin Martyr (cp. *Dial.* 100.1).[59]

In the fourth category, the phrase is used to introduce direct quotations from the Johannine Prologue (3.16.8; 5.18.2), presupposing the "bookish" sense of εὐαγγέλιον. This is especially clear in 3.16.8. Intending to illustrate the harmony between the Johannine Epistles (see 1 John 4.1-3; 2 John 7-8) and the Gospel of John (see John 1.14), Irenaeus contrasts that which is said in the epistle (ἐν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ φησίν . . .) with that which is said in the gospel (τῷ ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ ῥηθέντι . . .). A similar sense is probably intended in 5.18.2, where Irenaeus introduces a quotation from John 1.3 by asserting that John thus "spoke (λέγων) in the Gospel." Although the persistence of the rhetoric of speaking is important to note, εὐαγγέλιον here refers to a single document, the Gospel of John.

εὐαγγέλιον *as a nominative subject and datival agent*

Nine times in *Adversus haereses* the term "gospel" occurs either as the subject of an active verb or the agent of the action expressed by a passive

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[57] On the oral sense of εὐαγγέλιον in Ignatius' writings, see Gundry, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ," 324.

[58] More specifically, *Adv. haer.* 1.20.2 quotes Luke 2.49; 2.26.2 quotes Matt 10.24; 3.23.3 quotes Matt 25.41; and 5.22.1 quotes Matt 4.7 (cf. Deut 4.4, 5, 16).

[59] For instance, Justin introduces a saying of Jesus, by stating that it is "*written* in the Gospel" (ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ δὲ γέγραπται; *Dial.* 100.1), whereas a saying is introduced in 2 Clement 8.5 with the formula "the Lord *said* in the Gospel" (λέγει γὰρ ὁ κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ). Similarly, *Did.* 15.3 and 15.4 use the ambiguous phrase "as you have in the Gospel" (ὡς ἔχετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ). See Gundry, "ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ," 322-23.

verb (3.9.2, 10.2, 10.6, 11.2, 15.5; 4.20.9, 9.1, 32.1, 29.1).[60] In each case, the Gospel or a gospel actively transmits some type of information. Hence, this use of εὐαγγέλιον falls into two groups: [1] those which equate the Gospel with an entire category of revelation and [2] those which describe a single gospel document as metaphorically "showing" or "speaking" the information that the text contains.

In the former group, the exact boundaries of the category differ, as εὐαγγέλιον is paralleled with various other categories of revelation, knowledge, or truth. In some cases (e.g. 3.16.5), εὐαγγέλιον denotes the entirety of Christian teaching, in contrast to multifarious heretical fabrications. However, in 2.22.5, Irenaeus emphasizes the accuracy of information about the life of Jesus by stating that "the Gospel and all the presbyters (πρεσβύτεροι) testify (μαρτυροῦσιν)" to it. The latter category (i.e. πρεσβύτεροι) is clearly an oral tradition; Irenaeus subsequently specifies that its chain of transmission originated with those who both saw and heard the apostles. Consequently, we can infer that εὐαγγέλιον here refers neither to a single gospel document nor to the entire Christian truth in all of its manifestations. Rather, it denotes the written gospel tradition as a whole.

In most cases, however, εὐαγγέλιον is paralleled with the revelation of the "old covenant." In 4.9.1, for instance, Irenaeus emphasize the differences between the two by contrasting of "the manner of life required by the Gospel" with the law of the "old covenant," in a manner consistent with his schema of different stages of salvation history (e.g. 3.11.8). Consistent with his wider aim to prove the singularity of God from multiple prooftexts, other passages highlight the essential unity between the two, by comparing what the two "say" (4.32.1) or by showing how the Gospel itself demonstrates this unity (4.20.9).

Four similar examples occur within 3.9.1-11.6, the section in which Irenaeus attempts to demonstrate that all four gospels attest to the oneness of God (3.9.2, 10.2, 10.5, 11.2). In these passages, it proves particularly difficult to determine whether the term εὐαγγέλιον refers to a general category of revelation or a specific text, since this section simultaneously [1] appeals to the gospels as prooftexts to demonstrate that "neither the prophets, nor the apostles, nor the Lord Christ in his own person acknowledged any other Lord or God but the supreme Lord and God" (3.9.1)

[60] Although NT parallels to this use of εὐαγγέλιον are few, it is significant that 1 Cor 1.23 depicts the Gospel promising hope, while 1 Thess 1.5 depicts the Gospel coming in both word and power.

and [2] appeals to the unity of the gospels' testimony on this matter to establish the grounds to argue for their unique authority (see 3.11.7). In each case, Irenaeus presents examples from specific gospels, then concludes by noting what the gospel/Gospel "says" or "shows." It is thus possible that he refers to the conclusions of a single gospel with the ultimate aim of thus proving their unity and thus uses the term εὐαγγέλιον in its simple "bookish" sense.

However, since the conclusions are the same, it is also possible that Irenaeus here cites examples from all the gospels to demonstrate what the Gospel itself says about the nature of God, thus implying an understanding of εὐαγγέλιον as a wider category. For instance, in 3.9.2 and 3.10.5, the activity of the Gospel is paralleled with the activity of the prophets; the same God who was "proclaimed" (κεκηρυγμένος) by the prophets was "announced" (καταγγελλόμενος; 3.9.2) and "transmitted" (παραδιδόμενος; 3.10.6) by the Gospel (see also 3.10.2). The parallel with the prophets, together with the choice of these specific verbs, seems to suggest that εὐαγγέλιον does not here refer to any particular document, but rather to an entire category of revelation.[61] This ambiguity, however, may be deliberate. Irenaeus may draw upon both meanings in order further to emphasize that the singularity of God is witnessed by both the prophets and the Gospel, while the singularity of this essential aspect of the Gospel is simultaneously witnessed by all four gospels (see 3.11.7-8).

εὐαγγέλιον *in genitival constructions*

In 25 passages within *Adversus haereses*, εὐαγγέλιον used in genitival constructions, seven times with a genitive and 18 times as a genitive. Of the former category, the majority are consistent with the 27 instances within NT texts in which εὐαγγέλιον is likewise paired with a modifying genitive that specifies the subject, content, or ultimate source of the "good news."[62] For instance, in *Adv. haer.* 3.12.13, Irenaeus refers to the "Gospel of Christ,"

[61] For instance, the statement in *Adv. haer.* 3.9.2 concludes a comparison of statements from the Gospel of Matthew with statements in various Psalms. It is thus possible that the term εὐαγγέλιον does not here refer specifically to this one document, any more than the corresponding term "prophets" refers only to the Psalms.

[62] Indeed, of the twelve instances in which Irenaeus quotes a NT passage that includes the term εὐαγγέλιον, nine feature this pattern. E.g. Mark 1.1 ("Gospel of Jesus Christ") is quoted three times (*Adv. haer.* 3.10.5, 11.8, 15.3); Rom 1.1 ("Gospel of God") is quoted at 3.11.16; Eph 6.15 ("Gospel of peace") at 3.13.1; 2 Cor 4.4 ("Gospel of Christ") at 4.29.1; 2 Thess 1.6-10 ("Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ") at 4.27.4.

using a common Pauline phrase (see Rom 15.19; 1 Cor 9.12; 2 Cor 2.12; 9.13; 10.14; Gal 1.7; Phil 1.27; 1 Thess 3.2; also 2 Cor 4.4 as quoted at *Adv. haer.* 4.29.1). Moreover, he states that martyrs give their lives for the Gospel, evoking NT depictions of the Gospel as a truth for which a Christian should be willing to suffer or even die (see e.g. Mark 8.35; Phil 1.13; 2 Tim 1.8). Similarly, *Adv. haer.* 3.1.1 refers to the "Gospel of God" (see Rom 1.1, quoted at *Adv. haer.* 3.11.16; Rom 15.16; 1 Thess 2.2, 8, 9; 1 Pet 4.17) that all of the apostles "equally and individually possess," while 3.22.4 refers to the "Gospel of life" into which Christ brought all humanity (cp. 2 Tim 1.10).

As mentioned above, there are also two passages in which this structure occurs in titles of heretical books, namely the "Gospel of Judas" (1.31.1) and the "Gospel of Truth" (3.11.9).[63] When denouncing the Valentinian use of the latter, Irenaeus plays upon the different connotations of εὐαγγέλιον. He states that the text called the "Gospel of Truth" (ἀληθείας εὐαγγέλιον) agrees in no way with the four "gospels of the apostles (τοῖς τῶν ἀποστόλων εὐαγγελίοις)." Consequently, he argues that this text cannot be the gospel of truth, since if it were, the (singular) Gospel transmitted by the apostles could not also be the Gospel of truth (μηκέτι εἶναι τὸ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀποστολῶν παραδεδομένον ἀληθείας εὐαγγέλιον). That, of course, would be impossible, since those gospels are alone are true and reliable (ἀληθῆ καὶ βέβαια). Just as the written "Gospel of Truth" is contrasted with the authentic Gospel of truth transmitted by the apostles, so the singular "Gospel transmitted by the apostles" is equated with the four "gospels of the apostles."

The 18 instances in which εὐαγγέλιον is used as a genitive are similarly illuminative in the range and combinations of meanings that they invoke. In some cases, the term εὐαγγέλιον encompasses the entirety of the Christian truth. For instance, in the preface to Book III, Irenaeus states that Jesus "gave the authority (ἐξουσίαν) of the Gospel to his apostles" so that they could subsequently preach with perfect knowledge. Similarly, he writes of the "covenant of the Gospel" (ἡ διαθήκη τοῦ εὐαγγέλιον) that is manifest after Jesus' expiatory death (5.9.4; cp. 3.11.8) and summarily refers to the

[63] In citations of titles of the four gospels, Ireneaus always qualifies the relationship of the Gospel to the evangelist with the preposition κατά (= Lat. *secundum* in *Adv. haer.* 1.26.2, 1.27.2), whereas his citation of the title of a "heretical" text attributed to a disciple uses εὐαγγέλιον with a genitive (i.e. *Iudae Euangelium*, 1.31.1: "Judas' Gospel," instead of "the Gospel according to Judas"). It is possible that this correlates with Irenaeus' view that the authoritative gospels all represent a single Gospel according to different apostles, in contrast to spurious, heretical texts with their totalizing claims to truth.

"teachings of the apostles" as the "teaching (διδασκαλία) of the Gospel" (3.12.12).

In contrast, two passages clearly use εὐαγγέλιον to specify a single written document, insofar as they reference different parts of the Gospel of Mark (3.10.5 [2]). Likewise, in 3.1.1, Irenaeus states that Matthew "published a writing of Gospel (γραφὴν ἐξήνεγκεν εὐαγγελίου), while Peter and Paul were preaching (εὐαγγελιζομένων) at Rome and laying the foundations (θεμελιούντων) of the Church." The phrase "a writing of Gospel" is somewhat peculiar, especially due to the lack of article.[64] One possible interpretation is that Irenaeus here attempts to qualify his use of the term εὐαγγέλιον in the context of a book, in the same manner that he nuances the significance of this first apostolic writing by paralleling it with Peter and Paul's contemporaneous preaching (i.e. εὐαγγελίζεσθαι) and by arguing for the antiquity and the apostolic origins of ecclesiastical authority. A similar approach is found in 3.11.1, in which Irenaeus first states that John sought to contest heresy "through proclamation of the Gospel (διὰ τῆς τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κηρύξεως)" and later recounts that he began his "teaching according to the Gospel (τῆς κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον διδασκαλίας)" with John 1.1-5.

Three other examples concern the Gospel of Luke. These stress that there are "many important parts of the Gospel," which God communicated through Luke and which one can only learn through his testimony (3.14.3, 15.1 [2]). Insofar as they all occur in 3.13-15, the section in which Irenaeus attempts to defend the trustworthiness of Luke,[65] it is striking that Irenaeus does not simply argue that the Gospel of Luke communicates or illuminates the Gospel. Rather, he qualifies this gospel's role in a Christian epistemology, as necessary but partial. His related statements about Marcion represent an important complement to his depiction of the Gospel as a unity in delineated multiplicity—as well as to his specific defense of the Gospel of Luke as an indispensable facet thereof. In 1.27.2, for instance, he states that Marcion transmitted only "a little piece of the Gospel (*particulam Euaggelii*)" to his followers, despite boasting to the contrary (see e.g. 3.11.9). Especially since Irenaeus' defense of Luke probably responds to some proto-orthodox distrust of this text due to its associations with Marcion,[66]

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[64] Indeed, this may simply denote a "written gospel," although one wonders why the adjective εὐαγγελικός is not here used, as in 1.3.6, 2.27.2, and 3.10.5. Note that Rousseau and Doutreleau (SC 211) translate this phrase as "une forme écrite d'Évangile."

[65] See Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Canon*, 201-2.

[66] See Sundberg, "Dependent Canonicity," 410.

the contrast between the two is striking: The Gospel of Luke presents facets that are essential for understanding the single truth of the Gospel, which Marcion ironically claims to possess in its entirety, even though he only accepts portions of the Gospel of Luke.

A similar interplay of unity and multiplicity is apparent in *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8-9. Here, Irenaeus describes "the character (χαρακτήρ) of the Gospel" as four-formed (3.11.8) and states that "the form (ἰδέαν) of the Gospel" is thus harmonious (3.11.9). He also notes that Mark, by beginning with prophecy, thus "points to the winged image (τὴν πτερωτικὴν εἰκόνα) of the Gospel" (3.11.8). In a more general sense, he asserts that those who adopt more or less than four gospels "destroy the form (ἰδέαν) of the Gospel" by representing "the 'faces' (πρόσωπα) of the Gospel" as either less or more than four (3.11.9). Here, it is striking how Irenaeus uses the language of appearance to describe the multiplicity of the Gospel, thus suggesting that the "four-formed" quality of the Gospel does not reflect an ontological reality, but simply the way in which human believers may come to understand the singular, divine Truth. As such, Irenaeus here remains consistent with the Pauline sense of εὐαγγέλιον, as potentially differing in its mode of proclamation (e.g. Gal 4.2), but never in its essential message (Gal 1.6-8; also 2 Cor 11.14).[67]

The nature of this single Gospel is explicated by the reference in 3.11.7 to "the first principles (ἀρχαί) of the Gospel," which Irenaeus explicates as the belief in one God, as the Creator, the God who was "announced by the prophets," and the framer of the Mosaic Law. This passage, although brief, is reminiscent of his presentation of the Rule of Truth (1.22.1) and his summary of the unifying faith that the Church received from the apostles and their disciples (1.10.1). This further suggests that Irenaeus conceives of the Christian truth as multi-faceted in its manifestations, but aims to stress, above all, the singularity of its essence and origin.[68]

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[67] For instance, in his insightful analysis of the use of Matthew in *Adversus Haereses*, Bingham highlights Irenaeus' stress on the simultaneous unity and distinctiveness of the four gospels (*Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 4, 62-63, 84-88, 93-94), asserting that "From 3.11.8-9, one can glean that Irenaeus holds in balance both a Gospel's harmonious participation in the one apostolic Gospel and a Gospel's distinctive role. Just as God's arrangement of salvation history has both unity and complexity, continuity and discontinuity, so also does his arrangement of the Gospel" (p. 87); so also Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien*, 54-55.

[68] Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 102-4.

εὐαγγέλιον *in predicate constructions*

In *Adversus haereses* there are four occurrences of εὐαγγέλιον in predicate statements, all of which cluster in 3.11.8. Two of these occur in the context of his metaphorical association of the four gospels with four "living creatures" of Rev 4.7 (also Ezek 10.14) and/or the four faces of the cherubim upon which the Logos sits enthroned (see Ezek 1.5-11; 10.1-14; Pss 80.1; 90.1; Is 37.16). When equating each gospel with characteristics that correspond to its associated creature, by means of predicate adjectives, Irenaeus refers to the Gospel of John and the Gospel of Matthew as τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο, clearly adopting the "bookish" meaning of εὐαγγέλιον.

However, the other two examples in this passage combine and transform the two prior Christian meanings of εὐαγγέλιον. The first occurs near the beginning of the passage. After having argued that Matthew (3.9), Luke (3.10.1-4), Mark (3.10.5), and John (3.11.1-6) all attest to the oneness of God, Irenaeus cites different heretical groups that exclusively use each text (3.11.7).[69] He then begins his argument that one must not accept either more or less than four gospels (3.11.8). Paraphrasing 1 Tim 3.15, he asserts that the "pillar and support of the Church (στῦλος δὲ καὶ στήριγμα ἐκκλησίας) is the Gospel and the Spirit of Life (Πνεῦμα ζωῆς)."[70] Poetically interweaving the different components of this metaphor, he then states that the Church has four life-giving pillars and that the "four-formed Gospel (τετράμορφον τὸ εὐαγγέλιον)" is "sustained by one Spirit" (ἑνὶ δὲ Πνεύματι συνεχόμενον).

Irenaeus then enters into his famous discussion of the "living creatures." Structurally and thematically consistent with his combination of OT and NT prooftexts in his efforts to demonstrate their mutual witness to the one God and one Logos, he here integrates different descriptions of the four "living creatures," beginning with the testimony in the Jewish Scriptures and concluding with the Christian testimony in Revelation. First, he interprets Ps 80.1 through Ezekiel 1 and 10 (esp. 1.6; 10.15; 10.22) in order to depict Christ-Logos as enthroned upon the four-faced cherubim. He

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[69] I.e. Ebionites and the Gospel of Matthew (see further Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 70-71), Marcionites and the Gospel of Luke, Docetists (lit. "those who separate Jesus from Christ") and the Gospel of Mark, Valentinians and the Gospel of John (see further, Pagels, "Irenaeus, the 'Canon of Truth,' and the Gospel of John").

[70] In 1 Tim 3.15, the Church of the living God is described as the "pillar and ground" (στῦλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα). In *Adv. haer.* 3.1.1, the Gospel is described as the "ground and pillar (θεμέλιον καὶ στῦλον) of our faith" and the four gospels as four pillars, while in 4.21.3 the apostles are described as the twelve pillars of the Church.

then draws upon Rev 4.7 to describe their appearance, presupposing Ezek 10.15 (also 10.22) in his equation of the cherubim of Ezekiel 1 with the four "living creatures" of Ezekiel 10.[71] Identifying each creature with a gospel, Irenaeus concludes: τετράμορφα γὰρ τὰ ζῷα, τετράμορφον καὶ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον. In both cases, εὐαγγέλιον denotes something that is simultaneously singular and multiple: Due to the unifying support of the Spirit, the Church has the Gospel as its one pillar and the four gospels as its four pillars. Just as the Gospel is both "four-formed" and "bound together by one Spirit," so the four gospels can be likened to the four different creatures of Rev 4.7, but also to the four different faces of each creature in Ezek 1.10.[72]

Scholars such as T. C. Skeat and Graham Stanton have suggested that

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[71] In listing the animals in this passage, Irenaeus follows Rev 4.7's description of the four "living creatures" (lion, ox, human, eagle) rather than Ezek 1.10's description of the four faces of each "living creature" (man, lion, ox, eagle; compare MT Ezek 10.14, missing from LXX). Skeat suggests that the corresponding order of gospels followed in this passage (i.e. John, Luke, Matthew, Mark) represents a secondary corruption of an earlier source, which had originally followed Ezek 1.10 and thus listed the animals/gospels in the "Western Order" (i.e. Matthew, John, Luke, Mark; "Irenaeus and the Four-Gospel Canon," 196-98). Especially since Irenaeus elsewhere lists the evangelists in the order Matthew, Mark, Luke, John (e.g. 3.1.1), it seems tenuous to suggest that the order of the gospels in this passage aims at anything more than using the biblical image of the four living creatures to assert the proper number of gospels (see e.g. Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Bible*, 195). Moreover, in arguing otherwise, Skeat tautologically presupposes exactly what he attempts to prove, namely, that Irenaeus' "four-formed Gospel" is not a metaphorical image nor theological concept, but reflects a "Four-Gospel Canon" bound in a "Four-Gospel Codex" (on this theory, see discussion below).

[72] Skeat considers Irenaeus' combination of Ezekielian imagery with Rev 4.7 to be so inconsistent as to be irreconcilable without positing another, earlier source behind it. He proposes that this source, which he dates circa 170 C.E., used both Ezekiel and Revelation to defend the "Four-Gospel Canon," but did so in a manner that was less abbreviated than Irenaeus' version ("Irenaeus and the Four-Gospel Canon," 194-99). Not only does his theory that another text "without a shadow of a doubt" underlies *Adv. haer.* 3.11.8 seem highly tenuous, but it seems simply unnecessary to reconstruct a non-extant original source in order to explain this passage: The terse yet evocative combination of OT and NT sources in 3.11.8 seems quite characteristic of Irenaeus' mode of argumentation. Moreover, the supposed inconsistency in comparing the gospels to both the four faces of Ezekiel's cherubim and the four different animals in Revelation is well in keeping with the metaphorical style of this passage—as well as Irenaeus' use of the rhetoric of multiplicity/unity and appearance/reality to express the paradoxical truth of the essential unity of the Gospel as manifest in a combination of four different gospels.

Irenaeus' description of the Gospel as "four-formed" already presupposes the Church's acceptance of the canonicity of these texts in a "Four-Gospel Canon" and even implies the existence of a standardized four-gospel codex.[73] If Irenaeus indeed uses the singular εὐαγγέλιον to refer to a codex containing this collection of texts and compares this collection to the heavenly throne of the Logos, he has innovated a new meaning of this term, as truly denoting a "canon"—a list of texts with self-legitimizing sacred authority. But, are we meant to understand this singular "four-formed Gospel" as written, in the sense that it is a proto-canon or authoritative collection composed of four gospels? Or rather, does Irenaeus' metaphorical language in this section deliberately draw upon this term's polysemy, interplaying the singularity of the Truth that transcends writing with the multiplicity of the forms in which it nonetheless appears?

Above, we noted three other instances in which Irenaeus uses the singular εὐαγγέλιον to denote a group of written sources (i.e. 2.22.5; 3.5.1, 11.9). In each case, he articulates a distinction between oral tradition and written Gospel. In 2.22.5, the "Gospel" and "all the presbyters" are two categories of witnesses to the same teachings. Similarly, 3.5.1 and 3.11.9 distinguish the apostles who "transmitted the Gospel" from the other apostles. However, the context is important to note: 3.5.1 introduces Irenaeus' argument that the four gospels all attest to the unity of God, whereas

[73] Skeat equates the Four-Gospel Codex, whose origins he dates to 170 C.E., with the Four-Gospel Canon ("Irenaeus and the four-Gospel Canon," 198-99; contra T. C. Skeat and Colin H. Roberts. *The Birth of the Codex*, [London: Oxford University Press, 1985] 62-66). Stanton is more cautious, suggesting that "the universal adoption of a four-Gospel *canon* took much longer" ("Fourfold Gospel," 340). He also acknowledges the preponderance of references a single Gospel in *Adversus haereses* and concludes that "for Irenaeus, 'the Gospel' and in particular the words of Jesus have a higher authority than the individual writings of the evangelists." Yet, he nevertheless asserts that "By the time Irenaeus wrote in 180 AD, the fourfold Gospel was very well established" ("Fourfold Gospel," 321-22)—even dating the emergence of the four-gospel Codex to the time of Justin, based on his dating of the Muratorian Fragment and the possible evidence for four-gospel codices in the early third century P75 (which contains only Luke and John) and the late second century P64 (which contains fragments of Matthew that might have come from the same codex as P4, which contains Luke; "Fourfold Gospel," 326-29, 339-40). Until we have more evidence, any extrapolation of a four-gospel codex from two gospel codices seems tenuous, especially because the gospels continued to circulate individually and because even our earliest evidence for a four-gospel codex (i.e. P45) also contains Acts (see Skeat and Roberts, *Birth of the Codex*, 65-66; Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Bible*, 173-74; Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 242).

3.11.9 occurs at the end of his defense of the "four-formed Gospel" against the heretics and represents the conclusion of this same argument. However, Irenaeus did not even begin this argument from Scriptural proof, before having firmly established that "the tradition (παραδόσεως) from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent (διαμενούσης) among us" (3.5.1; also 3.2-4). Hence, he emphasizes the unity of the truth that was preached by all the apostles and variously transmitted through a combination of oral and written channels. Even as a group of writings are termed the "Gospel," Irenaeus characteristically focuses upon the single Truth to which they bear witness—together with the prophets, the writings of other apostles, and the oral tradition preserved in the Church.

It is also significant that the defense of the "four-formed Gospel" in 3.11.8 occurs within the wider argument of 3.5-11, namely, that the oneness of God is proclaimed by the apparently multiple but essentially unified testimony of the evangelists.[74] Although proper text selection is defended in 3.11.7-9, what is ultimately at stake is the unity of apostolic testimony, which illuminates the unity of the authentic Christian message, ensures the unity of the true Church, and demonstrates the unity of God.[75] In using εὐαγγέλιον to refer to a group of texts, Irenaeus combines its Pauline and Marcionite meanings. However, he does not simply contest Marcion's

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[74] Skeat acknowledges that Irenaeus here aims "to demonstrate the spiritual unity of the Four Gospels," but asks: "How could a random assemblage of four separate codices of the Gospels, differing perhaps in size, appearance, style of writing and so on, be regarded as having the unity and (which is just as important) the exclusivity which Irenaeus and, presumably, his source were at such pains to establish?" ("Irenaeus and the Four-Gospel Canon," 199). This seems to miss the point. As with the unity of the Jewish Scriptures with the apostolic tradition, what is important about the unity of the four gospels is that it transcends the appearance of difference and multiplicity. See also Bingham's critique of Skeat in *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 80-81, 89-94.

[75] This focus on the unity of the authentic Christian message, as opposed to the selection of proper texts, is consonant with *Adversus haereses* as a whole. Although denouncing heretics for composing spurious texts (1.20.1; 3.11.9), Irenaeus more often focuses on their interpretation of accepted texts, attempting to demonstrate the inconsistency of their beliefs by illuminating the proper interpretations of the writings (both gospels and epistles) that they share with the Church. Two particularly important examples of this tendency are the argument concerning the Valentinians' exegesis of the Johannine Prologue in 1.9.1-5 and the argument concerning the heretical interpretation of 1 Cor 15.50 in 5.9.1-14.4. See Donovan, *One Right Reading*, 36-37; Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret*, 295-96; Richard A. Norris, "Irenaeus' Use of Paul" in *Paul and the Legacies of Paul*, edited by William Babcock (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1990) 80-84.

adoption of a canon by articulating an orthodox "counter-canon," rejecting his choice of a gospel and asserting that a four-gospel Canon must instead serve as the written criterion for discerning the Christian truth.[76] Rather, the inclusivity of the Pauline sense of εὐαγγέλιον remains determinative, not only in Irenaeus' description of the four gospels as a single "four-formed Gospel," but also in his efforts throughout *Adversus Haereses* to articulate the one Christian message that unifies the multiplicity of authentic apostolic witnesses and, above all, to demonstrate the unquestionable unity of its divine source.[77]

From the "Memoires of the Apostles" to the "Four-Formed Gospel"

Within this survey, we have encountered a range of different uses of the term εὐαγγέλιον. Consistent with Irenaeus' frequent appeal to Christian prooftexts and his defense of the unique textual authority of the four gospels, some occurrences of this term invoke its simple "bookish" meaning, as denoting a single document (e.g. 3.1.1, 10.5, 11.8-9, 16.8; 5.18.2). Nevertheless, its original Pauline sense was also evident in many cases, especially in depictions of the Gospel as a truth preached (κηρύσσειν) by the apostles and transmitted (παραδιδόναι) to the Church (e.g. 3.1.1, 12.12, 14.1). However, the majority of cases that we surveyed did not clearly conform to either of these extremes. Rather, under the influence of both meanings, they either [1] engendered new meanings from some combination of the two, or [2] simultaneously drew upon both sets of connotations with deliberate and evocative ambiguity.

These cases most clearly illuminate Irenaeus' understanding of the Gospel, reflecting his integration of different influences towards the goal of unifying geographically diverse Christian communities into a universal Church that is bound together, against many dangerous heresies, by a single Rule of Truth (1.9.4, 22.1; 4.35.4).[78] Consequently, the differences between the

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[76] Lawson suggests that: "In actual practice S. Irenaeus quotes the Apostolic writings as of equal authority with the Old Testament Scriptures . . . (but) he always bases their authority on the fact of authorship, not on the simple circumstance that the book occurs in the Canon . . . Thus the Apostolic writings are to Irenaeus fully authoritative Scripture, but they are also only the substitute for the fully authoritative spoken word" (*Biblical Theology*, 35-36).

[77] Cf. Perkins, "Spirit and Letter," 311-12.

[78] The epistemological ramifications of this stance are articulated nicely by T. F. Torrance: "It was the indivisible reality and wholeness of the Truth embodied in Jesus

two previous meanings of εὐαγγέλιον often function as generative dichotomies, for Irenaeus, disclosing new levels of connotation and nuance. Just as the contradiction between the orally oriented sense of εὐαγγέλιον and its later "bookish" sense serves as a locus for issues of authority and interpretation, so the tension between the totalized singularity of its use to denote the Christian message and the inherent multiplicity of its "bookish" sense serves as a locus for issues of Christian epistemology.

As such, Irenaeus' combination of the Pauline and Marcionite meanings of εὐαγγέλιον corresponds to his integration of previous approaches to both oral tradition and textual authority. Like Justin (see 1.28.1), he explicitly appeals to Christian documents (e.g. 3.1.1). However, like Papias (see 5.33.4), he also lauds the presbyters' oral transmission of traditions and interpretations (e.g. 2.22.5; 3.2.2).[79] Any potential tension between these different modes of transmission is resolved, for Irenaeus, by invoking the essential singularity of the apostolic message and by asserting that all of the apostles "equally and individually possess the Gospel of God" (3.1.1). Moreover, he introduces an important mediatory aspect, by asserting that even the truth of Scripture stands dependent upon proper interpretation—a point most poignantly illustrated by the heretics' consistently false interpretation of authentic texts. Consequently, the correct exegesis of authoritative texts is necessarily linked to his understanding of the tradition that is preserved and guarded by the Church, as summarized in the Rule of Truth (see 1.10.1, 22.1; 2.27.1, 28.1-2; 3.2.2, 4.1, 5.1, 14.4; 4.32.1, 33.8).[80]

Consequently, Irenaeus' notion of a single Gospel with four written aspects mirrors his heresiological use of the rhetoric of unity and multiplicity in *Adversus haereses*. Irenaeus often contrasts the plurality of heresies and their multifarious depictions of the divine with the unity of the true Church and the true God (esp. 1.10-22).[81] However, he simultaneously appeals to the authority of multiple sources for this Truth, variously citing the law and the prophets, written epistles and gospels, the words of Jesus,

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Christ that constituted the fundamental theological base or canon of truth in all Irenaeus' efforts . . . in expounding and defending the Gospel. . . . That is to say, in Christ Jesus event and message, fact and meaning, the Truth and truths, are all intrinsically integrated and cannot be torn apart without serious dismemberment and distortion of the Faith" ("Deposit of Faith," 4).

[79] See Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 105-11.

[80] Benoit, "Écriture et Tradition," 40-43.

[81] See Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie* I, 233-34; Perkins, "Irenaeus and the Gnostics," 195-96; Bingham, *Irenaeus' Use of Matthew's Gospel*, 305.

the preaching of his apostles, and the tradition of the Church (4.20.1-4, 33.6-15).[82] For him, the very plurality of these witnesses testifies to the singularity of the Truth that they contain, by virtue of the one Logos, who is the ultimate cause of all of its manifestations (see e.g. 3.9.1, 11.8; 4.1.13, 20.9).[83] Indeed, it is no coincidence that Irenaeus' descriptions of the "first principles of the Gospel" (3.11.7), "the Rule of Truth" (1.22.1), and the shared beliefs of all the true churches of the world (1.10) are essentially the same, since Christ himself *is* the Truth (3.5.1) and the sole source for its dissemination (see also 4.20.2).[84] Moreover, the imagery of 3.11.8 suggests that the rhetorical interplay of multiplicity and unity has an important practical equivalent: Just as the "four-formed Gospel" announces a singular message of truth and just as each of the four gospels has its ultimate origin with the one Logos, so the Logos allows the true Church to remain unified, despite being "scattered throughout all the world" like the "four zones of the world" and "four principal winds" (see also 1.10.2).

What, then, is the relationship between the "Gospel" and these four "gospels" within *Adversus haereses*? On the one hand, the four gospels are texts of special authority with a special relationship to the Truth (e.g. 3.11.8, 14.3, 15.1). On the other hand, they are not the only texts with authority, inasmuch as he also appeals to apostolic epistles. Nor are any Christian documents completely indispensable, since the same apostolic tradition is orally preserved in the Church and wholly accessible to illiterate Christian communities (see e.g. 3.2-5; esp. 5.1). Indeed, Irenaeus can both ask and answer the question: "What if the apostles themselves had not left us writings?" (3.4.1). Even as he lays the foundation for an orthodoxy that would increasingly base itself in Scripture, the importance of oral tradition is repeatedly affirmed.

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[82] On Pauline influence in Irenaeus' articulation of the multiplicity of the "unity of history in all its variety," see Norris, "Irenaeus' Use of Paul," 91-94.

[83] For the rationale behind the authority of these "gospels" as uniquely rooted in the "Gospel," it is significant to note Irenaeus' use of the Johannine Prologue to assert that the accurate manifestation of the "Gospel" in these four written facets occurred through the agency of Christ as Logos (3.11.8). The Prologue serves as a pivotal proof-text to prove the Incarnation and the goodness of Creation for Irenaeus, but also functions to answer the question of exactly how it was that the law and prophets can witness the truth of "the Gospel" (see e.g. 4.1.13: "The writings of Moses are the words of Christ"): The same Logos who gave the "four-formed Gospel" also spoke to prophets and administered laws (3.11.8). See further Pagels, "Irenaeus, the 'Canon of Truth,' and the Gospel of John."

[84] Torrance, "Deposit of Faith," 5-6.

Furthermore, Irenaeus does not suggest that any one gospel has authority in itself. On the contrary, they can only reveal the truth when considered together; dependence on any one gospel, apart from the other three, inevitably results in heresy (3.11.7). This approach stands in stark contrast to both Justin Martyr and his student Tatian.[85] The benefits of a single harmonization of different gospel accounts are obvious.[86] If there is only one truth, one God, one Church, and one Christ, should there not also be only one account of Jesus' life and teaching? If the Incarnation, Passion, and Crucifixion of Christ represent actual, historical events that were pivotal in the salvation history of humankind, then should not the Church present a single, consistent account thereof to its followers, potential converts, and especially its enemies? Just the apologetic value of a single gospel can be deduced from pagan, Jewish, and Marcionite critiques of the contradictions between gospels, so its practical value is evinced by the popularity of Tatian's Harmony.[87]

Although Irenaeus rejects all other texts that claim to be "gospels" and depicts the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as uniquely authoritative, the image of the "four-formed Gospel" suggests that divine knowledge ultimately transcends the task of human recording.[88] As such, Irenaeus does not describe a "Canon of Christian Scriptures" in any later sense of those terms.[89] These texts are not yet the literary guarantors of the sacred tradition, merely its special guardians. Insofar as he simultaneously delineates the number of authentic gospels and asserts that more than one text must be used to learn the Christian Truth, his work is nevertheless seminal for

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[85] For the theory that Justin's quotations from NT texts reflect an early harmony, see Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 360-402; William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatesseron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994) 27-29; cf. Harry Gamble, "Christianity: Scripture and Canon," 41-42.

[86] Tjitze Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ: Factors in the Harmonization of the Gospels, Especially in the Diatesseron of Tatian," in *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, edited by William L. Petersen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) 147-54. See also Cullmann, *Early Church*, 39-50; Barr, *Holy Scripture*, 45.

[87] Baarda, "ΔΙΑΦΩΝΙΑ—ΣΥΜΦΩΝΙΑ," 133-38; Petersen, *Tatian's Diatesseron*, 432-37; Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien*, 7-43.

[88] On Irenaeus' assertion of the limitations of human knowledge, especially against the heretical predilection for speculation, see e.g. 2.25.3, 28.3, 6; also W. R. Schoedel, "Theological method in Irenaeus (*Adversus Haereses* 2.25-28)," *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984) 31-49; Torrance, "Deposit of Faith," 7-8.

[89] See Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 26, 32-36.

the later development of a canon.[90] Since, for Irenaeus, all of the apostles equally possess the Gospel and thus testify to the same Truth, this does not represent a rejection of the oral tradition, but rather an important complement to it.[91] Just as Irenaeus establishes the Church's unique access to Truth by appealing to the succession of bishops and presbyters who transmitted apostolic teachings (e.g. 3.4.1; 4.33.8), so his delineation of a specific number of authentically apostolic gospels demarcates the boundaries of this true Church and provides a critical means to promote unity against the so-called heretics (see 1.1.1; 3.15.2).

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[90] See McDonald, *Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, 170-72.
[91] Lawson, *Biblical Theology of Irenaeus*, 87-96.